

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached sheets of drawings includes changes to Figures 2(b), 3(a) and (b), 4(a), (b) and (c) and 5(a) and (b). These sheets replace the original sheets of Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Support for the newly added elements may be found throughout the specification, for example, at pages 5-8 of the specification. No new matter has been added.

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-7 and 9 have been amended. No new matter has been added. Support for the amendments may be found throughout the specification. Claim 2 has been cancelled without prejudice. New claims 10-20 have been added. Claims 1, 3-7 and 9-20 are pending. Support for the new claims may be found throughout the specification.

Figures 2(b), 3(a) and (b), 4(a), (b) and (c) and 5(a) and (b) have been amended. No new matter has been added.

DRAWINGS

The Examiner has objected to the drawings as being incomplete. See Office Action at p. 2. Specifically, the Examiner requests that "the drawings [] show the elongation and retraction of the bridge with respect to the stowage assembly." Id.

Replacement sheets for Figures 2(b), 3(a) and (b), 4(a), (b) and (c) and 5(a) and (b) are provided. No new matter has been added. Applicants believe that the replacement sheets for Figures 2(b), 3(a) and (b), 4(a), (b) and (c) and 5(a) and (b) adequately depict a bridging unit as described in the claims.

Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of this objection.

SPECIFICATION

The Examiner has objected to a paragraph in the specification. See Office Action at p. 3. Applicants have amended the paragraph beginning on line 27 of page 1 to correctly recite the phrase "are in the deployed." Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of this objection.

CLAIM OBJECTIONS

The Examiner has objected to claims 3, 5 and 8. See Office Action at p. 3. Specifically, the Examiner has objected to claim 5 as being in improper form. Id. The Examiner has also objected to claim 3 for lack of antecedent basis. Id. The Examiner has further objected to claim 8 for a typographical error. See Office Action at p. 4.

Applicants have amended claim 5 to correctly depend from independent claim 1. Further, amended claim 1 now provides proper antecedent basis for the phrase "said housing body" in claim 3. With respect to the Examiner's objection to claim 8, Applicants note that claim 8 was cancelled in a preliminary amendment filed on August 18, 2005. Applicants believe the Examiner intended to object to claim 9 which contains the phrase "of each unit are the deployed." In amending claim 9, Applicants have deleted the phrase "of each unit are the deployed." Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of these objections to the claims.

CLAIM REJECTIONS

Rejection of claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner has rejected claims 1 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 1,593,999 to Bingham et al. ("Bingham"). See Office Action at p. 4. Claim 3 depends from independent claim 1.

Claim 1 relates to a bridging unit configured to engage with a like bridging unit for traversing a bridging zone. The bridging unit includes a stowage housing in use being disposed to one side of the bridging zone, and including a housing body that includes a box-like structure having opposed peripheral walls, the box-like structure having a compartment therein for receiving a spanning assembly movable between a stowed position in which position the spanning assembly is disposed within the compartment and a deployed position in which position the spanning assembly is disposed outside the box-like structure so as to at least partially traverse the bridging zone in an elevated position, and deployment apparatus operable to cause movement of the spanning assembly between the stowed and deployed positions.

The Examiner contends that Bingham "discloses a bridging unit wherein a housing body (11a, 11b) includes a box-like structure having peripheral side walls (13a, 13b) and a top wall (17a, 17b), said top wall (17a, 17b) forming a platform from which the spanning assembly (10a and 10b) is accessed when in the deployed position" See Office Action at p. 4-5. Applicants respectfully disagree. Bingham describes bridge sections 10a or 10b being "pivotally mounted to swing on uprights or frames 11a or 11b, which are appropriately braced by cross beams 12a or 12b. See lines 60-64 of Bingham. Bingham also describes braces 13 which reinforce an open-

sided chassis frame 14. See lines 60-66 of Bingham. Bingham does not describe or otherwise teach a stowage housing that includes a housing body that includes a box-like structure having opposed peripheral walls. Bingham does not describe a box-like structure having a compartment for receiving a spanning assembly.

Accordingly, claim 1 is not anticipated by Bingham. Claim 3 depends from claim 1 and is patentable for at least the reasons described above. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

Rejection of claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Bingham in view of Rohrs

The Examiner has rejected claims 2 and 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bingham in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,084,713 to Rohrs et al. ("Rohrs"). See Office Action at p. 5. In an effort to expedite prosecution and not in acquiescence to the rejection, Applicants have cancelled claim 2 thus rendering this rejection moot with respect to the claim. Claim 4 depends from independent claim 1.

As previously discussed, Bingham does not describe a stowage housing that includes a housing body that includes a box-like structure having opposed peripheral walls. Bingham further does not describe a box-like structure having a compartment for receiving a spanning assembly. Bingham also does not teach or suggest a bridging unit which includes a stowage housing that includes a housing body. Bingham also does not teach or suggest a housing body that includes a box-like structure having opposed peripheral walls nor does Bingham teach or suggest a box-like structure having a compartment for receiving a spanning assembly.

Such a defect is not remedied by Rohrs. Rohrs describes a "vehicle wheelchair ramp for loading and unloading an occupant confined to a wheelchair." See Abstract. Rohrs does not teach or suggest a bridging unit which includes a stowage housing that includes a housing body. Rohrs further does not teach or suggest a housing body that includes a box-like structure having opposed peripheral walls nor does Bingham teach or suggest a box-like structure having a compartment for receiving a spanning assembly.

None of the above-cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest a bridging unit that includes a stowage housing in use being disposed to one side of the bridging zone, and

including a housing body that includes a box-like structure having opposed peripheral walls, the box-like structure having a compartment therein for receiving a spanning assembly movable between a stowed position in which position the spanning assembly is disposed within the compartment and a deployed position in which position the spanning assembly is disposed outside the box-like structure so as to at least partially traverse the bridging zone in an elevated position, and deployment apparatus operable to cause movement of the spanning assembly between the stowed and deployed positions.

Since claim 4 depends on claim 1, it is patentable over the combination of Bingham and Rohrs for at least the reasons described above. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

Bingham in view of Mampaey

The Examiner has rejected claims 5, 6 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bingham in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,875,603 to Mampaey ("Mampaey"). See Office Action at p. 6. Claims 5, 6 and 9 depend from independent claim 1.

As discussed above, Bingham does not teach or suggest a bridging unit which includes a stowage housing that includes a housing body. Bingham further does not teach or suggest a housing body that includes a box-like structure having opposed peripheral walls nor does Bingham teach or suggest a box-like structure having a compartment for receiving a spanning assembly.

Such a defect is not remedied in Mampaey. Mampaey describes "[a] gangway [] connected on one end to an annular platform surrounding, and movable up and down a spiral staircase." See Abstract. Mampaey does not teach or suggest a bridging unit which includes a stowage housing that includes a housing body. Mampaey further does not teach or suggest a housing body that includes a box-like structure having opposed peripheral walls nor does Bingham teach or suggest a box-like structure having a compartment for receiving a spanning assembly.

None of the above-cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest a bridging unit that includes a stowage housing in use being disposed to one side of the bridging zone, and including a housing body that includes a box-like structure having opposed peripheral walls, the

box-like structure having a compartment therein for receiving a spanning assembly movable between a stowed position in which position the spanning assembly is disposed within the compartment and a deployed position in which position the spanning assembly is disposed outside the box-like structure so as to at least partially traverse the bridging zone in an elevated position, and deployment apparatus operable to cause movement of the spanning assembly between the stowed and deployed positions.

Since claims 5, 6 and 9 depend on claim 1, they are patentable over the combination of Bingham and Mampaey for at least the reasons described above. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

Patentability of new claims 10-20

New claims 10-20 depend from independent claim 1. Since none of the cited references describe a bridging unit as disclosed in claim 1, dependent claims 10-20 are patentable over the above-cited references for at least the reasons described above. Applicants respectfully request the allowance of new claims 10-20.

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CONCLUSION

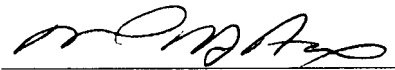
For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the pending rejections. Applicants believe that the claims now pending are in condition for allowance.

A petition for a three-month extension of time is submitted herewith.

Should any fees be required by the present Reply, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account **19-4293**.

Respectfully submitted,

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